3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

Maize, the Ngoni staple cereal which had replaced the tall millet they had formerly preferred, was stored on the cob in the grain stores which were described in Chapter IV. Women whose husbands could afford to hire labour to work in their fields often had three or four large grain stores, and their presence in the compound conferred importance on their owners. Inside the hut were earthenware jars of beans, cowpeas, bulrush millet, clarified fat and butter, dried chillies, while from the rafters hung bunches of herbs and dried green spinach. Some of the jars were polished a shining black, others had a blue or green glaze on them. It was a Ngoni girl's ambition to go to her new home when married with a good array of storage pots, baskets, mats, spoons, stirring sticks, and a wooden meat-dish. This would show her in-laws that she was industrious and intended to have a high standard of household management in her new home.

Varieties of food and their preparation

Ngoni women prided themselves on feeding their households well, both in variety, quantity and quality. Although they could rely on helpers to work in the gardens and to do some of the preparing of food before cooking, they always managed their own supplies and provided a variety of menus, and showed that they could cook well themselves and instruct others.

Ngoni girls clustered round the fire when a special dish was being prepared. They watched every movement of their mother as she lifted one pot off the fire and put another on, measured out water in a spoon to add to the sauce, stirred the maize porridge strongly and evenly to get rid of lumps and bubbles, washed each stirring stick in a pot of water before using it again.

There was variety in the dishes served from day to day in big Ngoni households, usually in the form of a main dish of cereal with side dishes of broth and vegetables and less often of meat or chicken. The main dish was served in the

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

132 84° F. and the mean minimum 61·5° F.[1] Three seasons are distinguished: the wet season, from the beginning of November until about April; the cold season, from May until July; and the hot season, from August until the rains begin again. Most of the planting takes
[241] place in the first half of the wet season, and the harvest comes after the rains have ceased. There is very little fishing, but antelopes, leopards,
224 wild pig, and buck are hunted for their meat, and lions, leopards,
136 hyenas, and monkeys on account of the damage they do to crops and livestock. The greater part of the region is free enough from tsetse fly to permit cattle-keeping, and for the tribe as a whole there is approxi-
[231] mately one head of cattle to every two people. Pigs, sheep, goats, and chickens are also kept.

171 The material culture of the tribe is similar to that of their neigh-
342 bours. They live in one- or two-roomed huts of bamboo or pole and
323 mud; some women make pottery and some men make reed mats;
285 all buy their clothes and their hoes from the shops.[2]

Three languages are used in the region: Ci-Ngoni, a language akin to
197 Zulu, is now heard only in songs and royal praises; Ci-Nyanja is taught in the schools and is used for communication with Europeans and Indians; while the normal language used every day in the villages is a dialect of Ci-Nsenga.

I. THE STATE

Old Administrative System

186 The Ngoni think of themselves as different from their neighbours
649 because of their chiefdomship. The other tribes do not, in the eyes
642 of the Ngoni, possess the same kind of pyramidal and centralized organization which was characteristic of the régime of Mpezeni I and which persists in a modified form at the present time.

649 The important positions in the old political structure were occupied
631 by members of the royal lineage, their queens, the regional governors,[3]
554 and the lieutenants.[4] The political system was at the same time the territorial system, residence being determined by political allegiance. The pattern of residence and allegiance persisted despite the movement of the tribe as a whole from one region to another and despite

[1] Trapnell, *Ecological Survey*, pp. 1–3.
[2] See my *Material Culture of the Fort Jameson Ngoni*.
[3] *Mabwanamkulu*, pl. *abanamkulu*. [4] *Nduna*, pl. *mdune*.

241 those who have not been working. Some people choose to do their
273 work in the garden on the day previous to the party, on the theory
476 that working and drinking do not go together. A few people offer
baskets of ground-nuts or other crops or meat in return for a day's
[465] labour, and monetary payments are also known.

Craftsmen

463 There are a number of specialized occupations which give rise to
inter-village trading. Pots are made by women. Some villages have no
● 323 potter and their inhabitants are dependent on pot-makers in neigh-
[462] bouring villages. Sometimes a woman may acquire a reputation for
pot-making sufficiently high to attract custom even from villages
where there are already pot-makers. Pots are sold in return for their
own volume of maize, or for money, or the customers may be required
to provide sufficient clay for twice the amount of pottery that they
wish to obtain.

285 Basketry is a man's craft, and at the end of the rainy season, when
[462] it is necessary to watch all day in the gardens for monkeys, men with
this skill spend their time at it. Baskets are sold for money or for maize,
and, as with pottery, there is a certain amount of inter-village sale.

759 Herbalists draw their clients from a wider area than do the pot- and
basket-makers, and their contacts with their patients are more intimate.
If a man falls sick, the remedies known in the family are tried first, but
if these are unsuccessful he may go to someone who is known for his
wide knowledge of medicines. Patients will travel up to 15 miles or
so to consult a herbalist, who may require them to live in his village
to receive treatment. Payment for medical treatment is sometimes
demanded part in advance, but other practitioners ask for a fee only
when a cure has been effected. Since the establishment of medical
[648] services by the Administration the way has been open for the medical
orderlies to operate in opposition to the herbalists, using misappro-
priated European drugs.

III. THE FAMILY

Principles of Descent

611 The Ngoni are traditionally a patrilineal patrilocal people paying
[579] bride-wealth with cattle. This tradition is reflected in modern prac-
[583] tice only to a limited extent. Many of the men and women who were
[184] interviewed after Zwangendaba had crossed the Zambezi came from

/1 cont'd/

IV

353 Inside the house most of the household possessions are kept on the floor. At the back of the hut are the pots of the household, 415 large ten-gallon beer brewing pots, smaller pots for holding the beer when brewed, bowls for drinking beer, wide mouthed pots for washing, small deep pots for cooking porridge and relish, waterpots, ornamented gourds for strong beer, and simple gourd cups for water. With them are also enamel saucepans, basins, mugs, and dishes, and sometimes a kettle. Only the very prosperous have glassware or [51] china crockery.

• 323 Pottery is made by women only, and it is not a skill that every [414] woman possesses. In a village there are usually one or two women who make pots, while a few women have a reputation for good pottery that attracts customers to them from a wider neighbourhood. [803] Pots are usually sold for money, salt, or in return for bringing twice [415] the amount of clay needed to make the article required. Petrol and paraffin tins as well as enamel and tinware are also used.

For pot making, clay is chosen from an anthill or marsh, and soaked for three days before being kneaded. The pot is made from a coil, and after smoothing it is ornamented. It is burnt for one day, [824] and may be given a dull black colour by being rubbed with the leaves of the mbwabwa tree.

285 Hung on the walls of the hut or lying on the floor are the [353] different baskets owned by the household. Baskets are made by men, [245] and during the dry season when there is much road repair work to be [491] done it is common to see three or four men spending their evenings after work on the road in making baskets. These baskets are often [843] made to order, but the occasional hawker is seen. Large cuboid baskets are used for transporting mealies and grain, shallow baskets of two feet in diameter are used for winnowing flour, and small hemispherical baskets take the place of plates for /2/ porridge. These latter are frequently made in pairs, tied together with a string of beads, so that the second baket acts as a lid for the first and keeps

4: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1909)1910 FT7 Yao : Marav. FR4 Ngoni FR5

M 251 343 Near the house, which is often surrounded by a fence, either within it or outside, is the grain store or shelter, a cylindrical structure made like a hurdle, set on a platform below, supported on posts 2 feet above the ground. Sometimes the whole, sometimes only the lower part, is mudded over. It is covered by a thatched roof, which can be removed at will. At one point at the base there is commonly a hole to allow of taking out the *chewinya* (maize) cobs as they are required. These shelter vary in size, average being 6 feet about the platform and diameter 4 feet. There is often also a pigeon house, made of the cylinder of bark removed from a tree; this is put in a tree or supported on poles, and the ends partly closed with crossed sticks, near it will be a broken pot supported on a forked stick, kept filled with water for the birds to drink. Any sheep, goats or cattle are kept in the *khola* or kraal made of trees, and often pretty strong, and covered with thorny branches to withstand the visits of leopards, etc.

M 352 354 The household furniture consists of little. Near the middle of the hut is the fire, with some big stones on which to set cooking pots; sleeping mats either set out or rolled up; two or three cooking pots and baskets of various sizes; a water pot and gourd ladle.

Pottery.

M 323 415 There is no tradition whence pottery making was introduced. No potter's wheel or mould is used, no tools are used save a knife to score patterns on the pots. The material employed is a kind of clay, to which is added some cattle dung (I presume to get the small pieces of grass). A pot is made at one sitting, building it up from the open mouth. It is done by women, who are potters by trade. Before baking, the pot is dried in the sun, then rubbed over with green leaves, which prevents cracking. Baking is performed by making a fire below and all round the pot as it stands open end downwards. Among

N [323] Angoni and Atonga some pots are "painted" with plumbago (*thorwe*), the *nkuti* with *irandwe*, a red earth, oxide of iron, before burning. The decoration consists only in a few waved lines near the neck. No pottery figures are made, and no special funereal pots; the deceased's own pots are broken and placed over his grave.

FIG. 11.

The following are the different varieties of pottery vessels (Fig. 11):—

Mbaula, a spherical pot for water (*a*).

Mbeti, a larger pot of similar pattern for beer-making (*b*).